Would you believe they put a 'toon on the moon

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

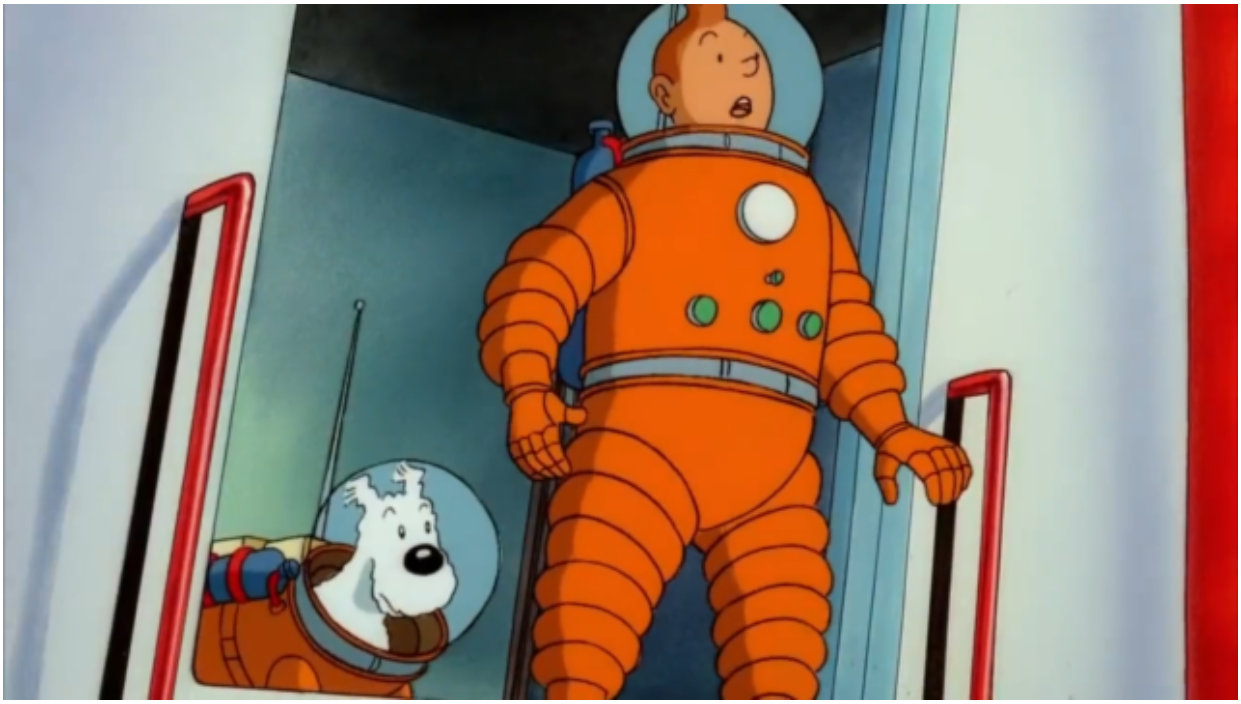
None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Herge's Adventures of Tintin is actually the work of Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi. Despite being the most insipid 'superhero' in comic book history and his creator passing away in 1983, the gormless 'boy scout' reporter and explorer has been translated into over 70 languages and shifted more than 200 million copies since his inception in 1929. Making his British debut in the children's weekly comic Eagle in 1951, Tintin is now as much a household name to English speakers as those first introduced to him via his native tongue. While Tintin's original 24 album run ended in 1976, the behemoth of a franchise has since spawned all manner of adaptations across every conceivable medium, of course, stretching to video games. Bestowed with an exclusive license, Infogrammes won that dubious honour.

Typically Tintin's courageous escapades revolve around investigating a perilous mystery, rescuing the vulnerable

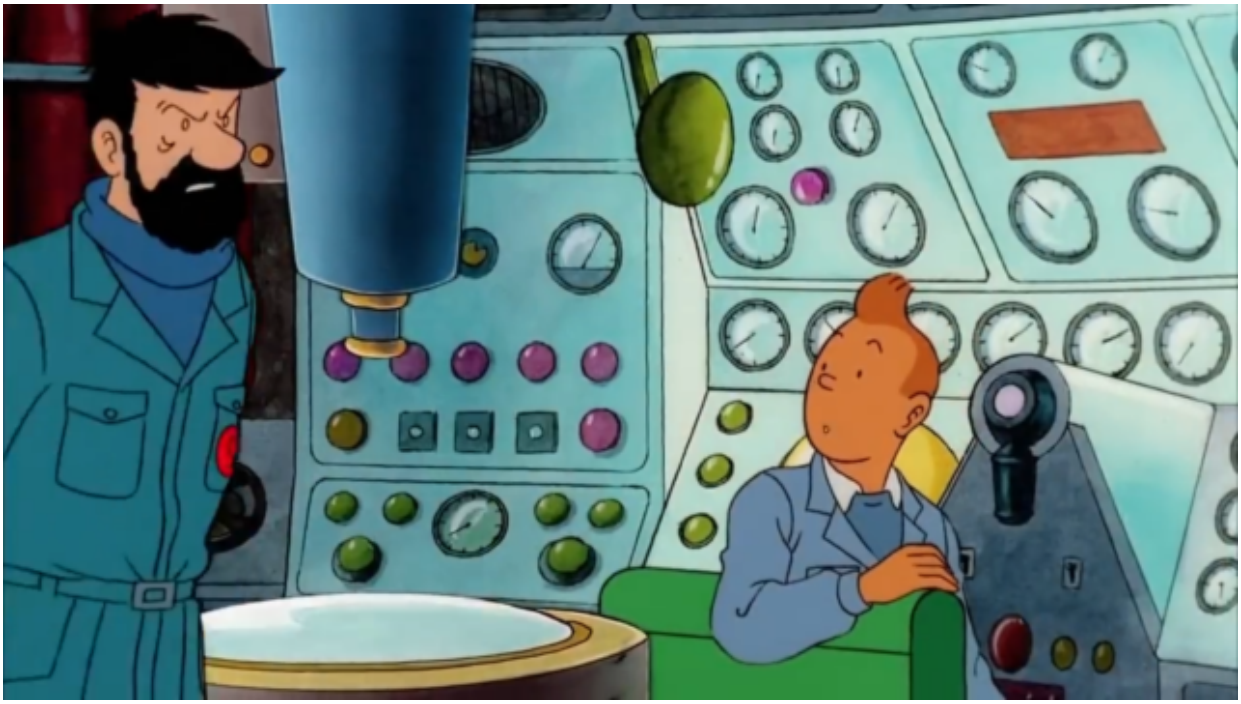
from one impending threat or another, and (in theory) documenting the whole incident for posterity.

Snowy - a loyal and mostly brave yet inconveniently arachnophobic wire fox terrier - barely leaves the protagonist's side...



...while a regular, diverse supporting cast also assist. These include...

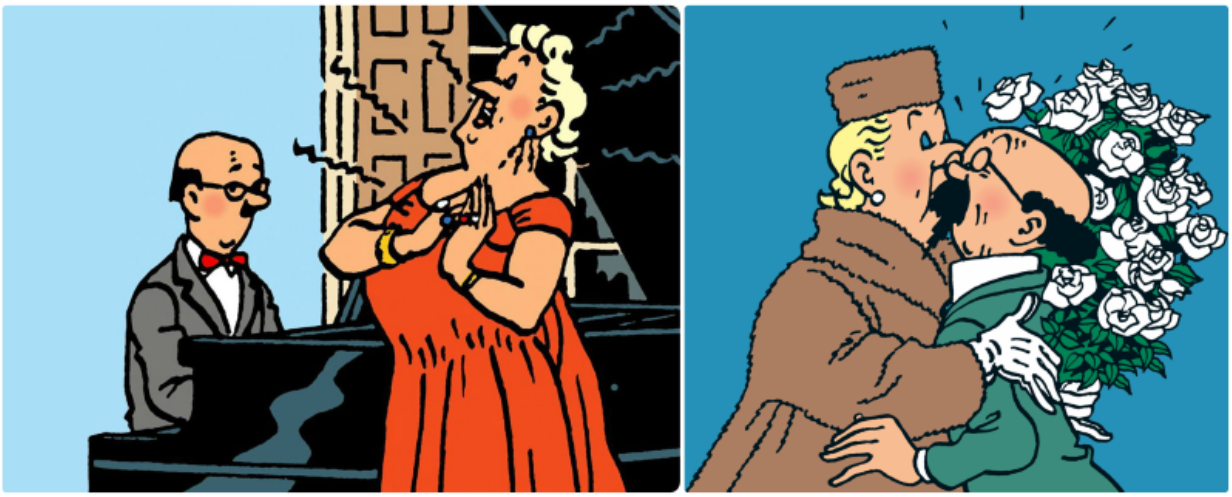
- The cynical and abrasive, alcoholic retired sailor, Captain Haddock, who comes equipped with an array of sanitised 'obscenities' and looks as though he could drill through rock with his steely glare alone.



- Hilariously hearing-deficient, Professor Calculus, who turns into a raving lunatic should you dare to accuse him of "acting the goat". In-between inventing various ingenious gadgets that is. A bit like James Bond's Q I suppose, only born 18 years earlier.

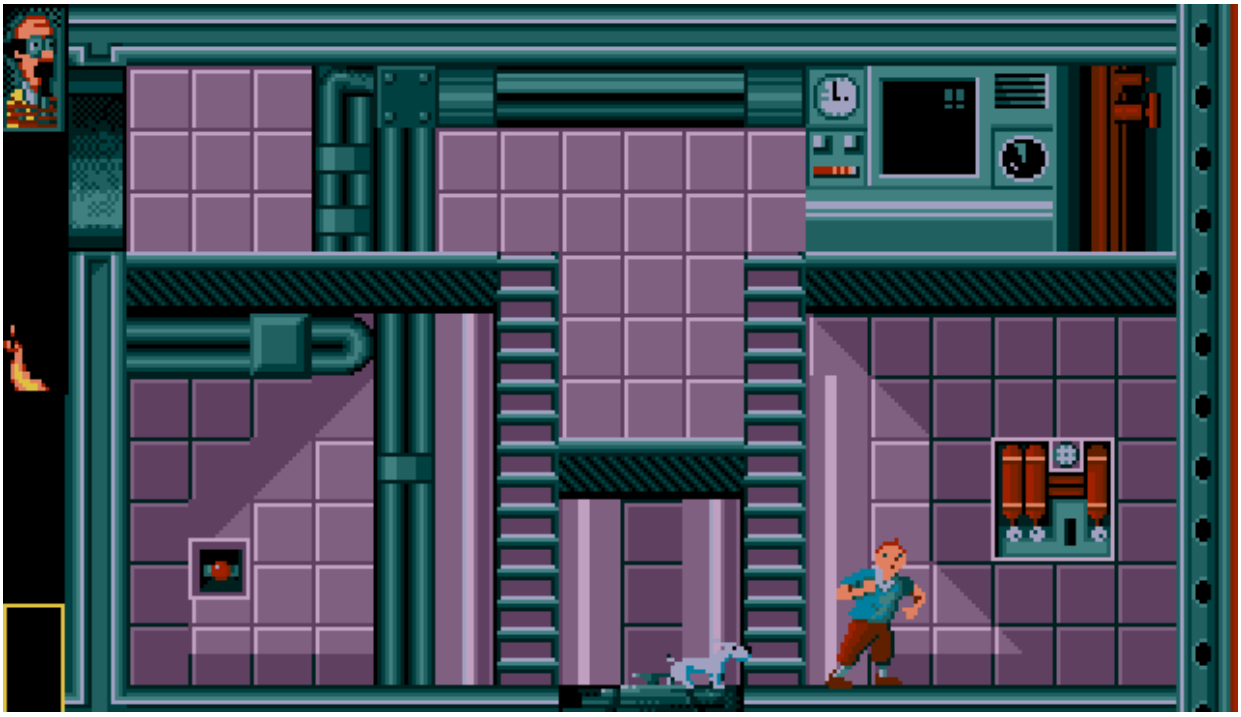
- Thomson and Thompson, the bungling, clumsy, twin detectives who are forever arresting the wrong 'perpetrators'. They serve to provide the comic relief, assuming you find spoonerisms to be funny.

- Opera singing diva, Bianca Castafiore, who mostly exists to wind up Captain Haddock with her appalling voice and narcissistic tendencies, eliciting his predictable remonstrations.



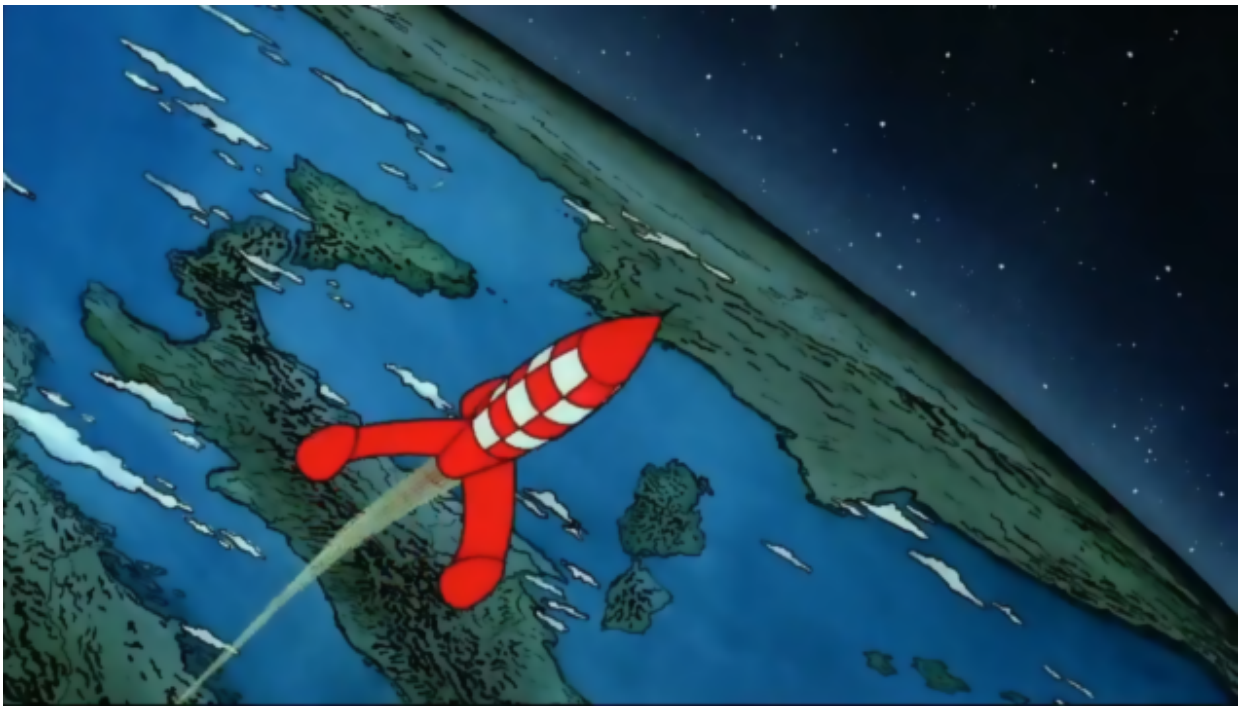
1989 - upon the advent of Tintin's 50th anniversary - denoted the quiffed journalist's first outing in pixel land, courtesy of Infogrammes' mixed-genre gaming alliance, 'Tintin on the Moon', for the Amiga, Atari ST and DOS platforms.

Loosely inspired by Herge's 'Destination Moon' and 'Explorers on the Moon' comic books first published between 1950 and 1953, it's an exceedingly flimsy affair amounting to two disparate sub-games, repeated four times to give the illusion of longevity. OK, so the levels get progressively faster and more protracted as we advance. Hardly a substitute for real variety and imagination though is it? Had it not been for the diligently authentic portrayal of the core characters from the comic/cartoon/fairy cakes/soap-on-a-rope, you'd have no clue that the game was in any way related to Tintin. Nevertheless, thanks to his 40 frame animation repertoire, fans should have no trouble identifying with their cartoon hero.



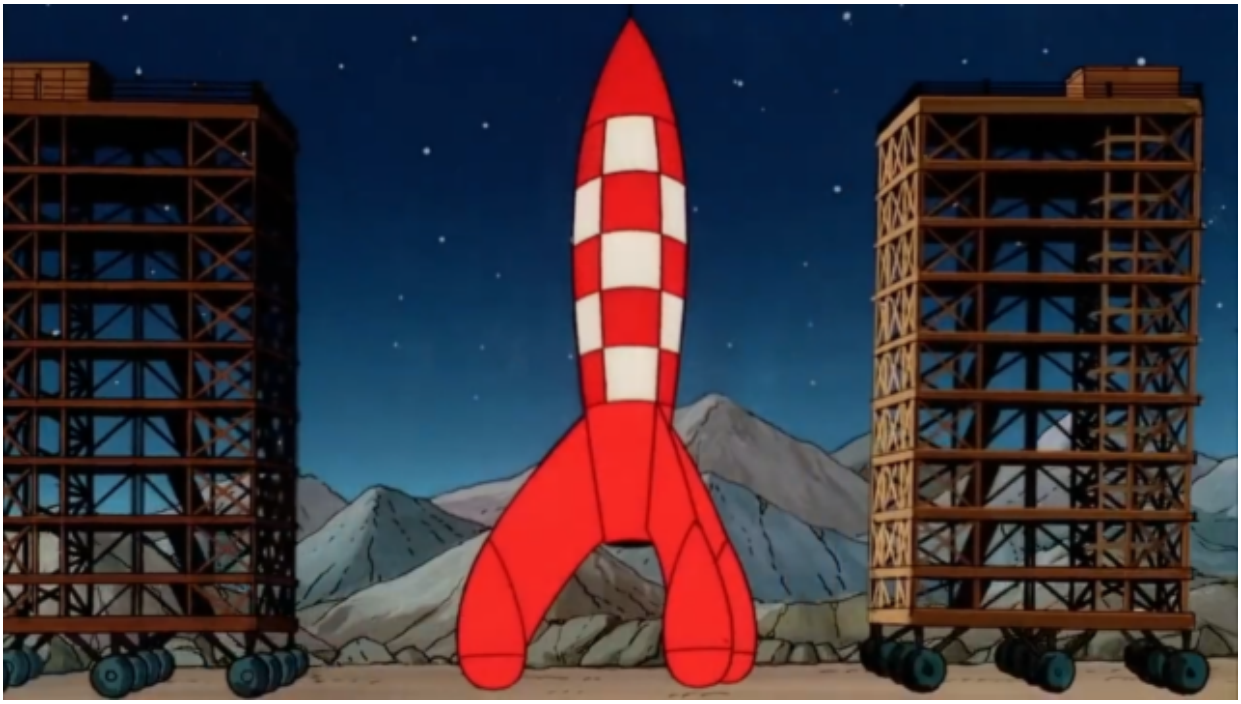
"The first rocket to the Moon is about to be launched from the Atomic Research Centre at Sprodj in Syldavia. Onboard are Tintin, Snowy, Captain Haddock, Professor Calculus and the engineer Wolff. The army of technicians make their final checks. The rocket is all set for take-off. Sirens and loudspeakers blare out the signal to evacuate the launch area. The gantry ramps fall slowly aside. Time: 1:29 a.m. The countdown is underway. 5-4-3-2-1. Ignition! In an explosion of flame and smoke, the mighty space ships lifts off the pad, heading for Earth orbit."

- The instruction manual lays the groundwork for the game's scenario, simultaneously chronicling the opening animated introduction.



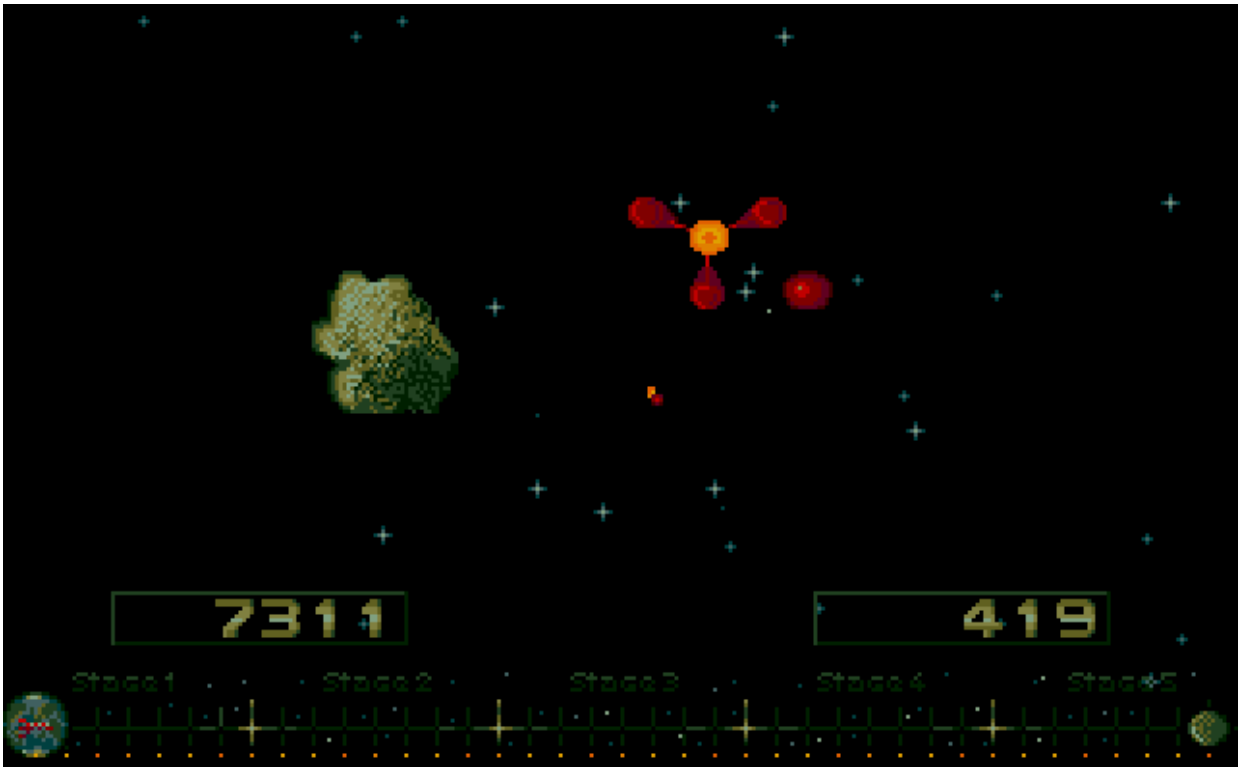
Leaving us in no doubt where we're heading (even for those of us who missed the anvil-sized clue in the title), the game begins with the launch of Tintin's space ship, its design

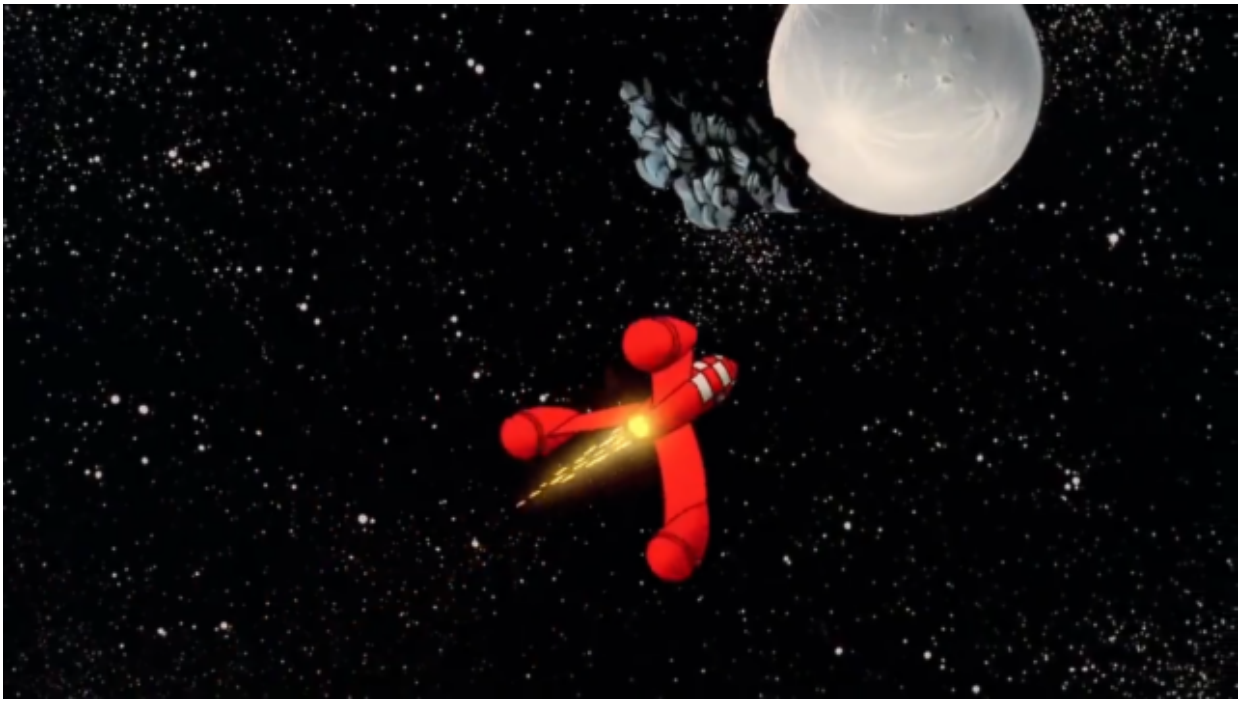
inspired by the German V-2 rocket. Appearing to allude to the Amiga boing ball is no more than a fortuitous, inadvertent coincidence. Its red and white checked pattern actually emanates from an illustration Herge sourced from Leslie Simon's 1947 book 'German Research in World War II'.



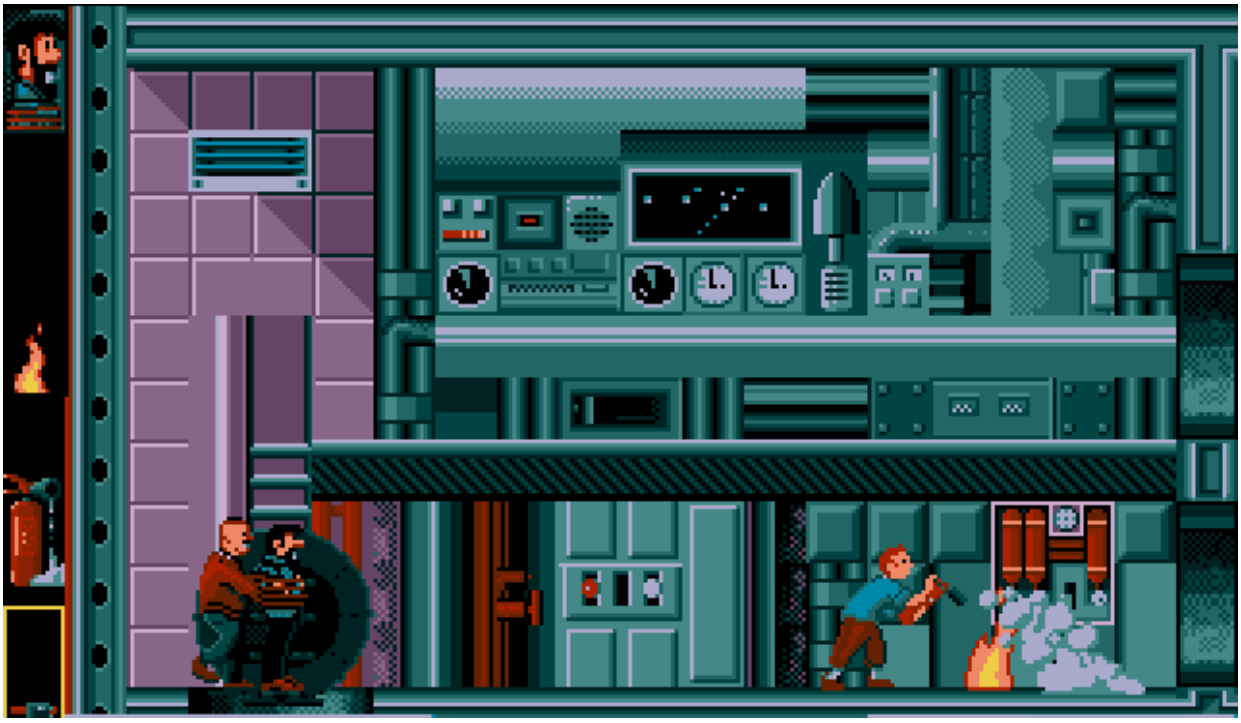
Pre-dating the first (unmanned) moon landing in 1959, Herge was obliged to conduct extensive research into the technology and science that would make his fictional account seem plausible. Some of his 'predictions' were surprisingly accurate, which led to acknowledgement by New Scientist magazine and Herge's iconic illustration depicting astronaut Neil Armstrong being welcomed to the moon by Tintin et al. In commemoration of the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969, the intimation was that Tintin beat him to it.

Once in orbit, we take charge of the rocket's controls employing the joystick or mouse, hurtling into the screen in a third person, 3D, meteorite-dodging trial. Yellow spheres must be collected to boost our fuel supplies, while the red ones are our means of progression to the next level. Snagging the eighth orb triggers a flip into the proceeding platforming segment.



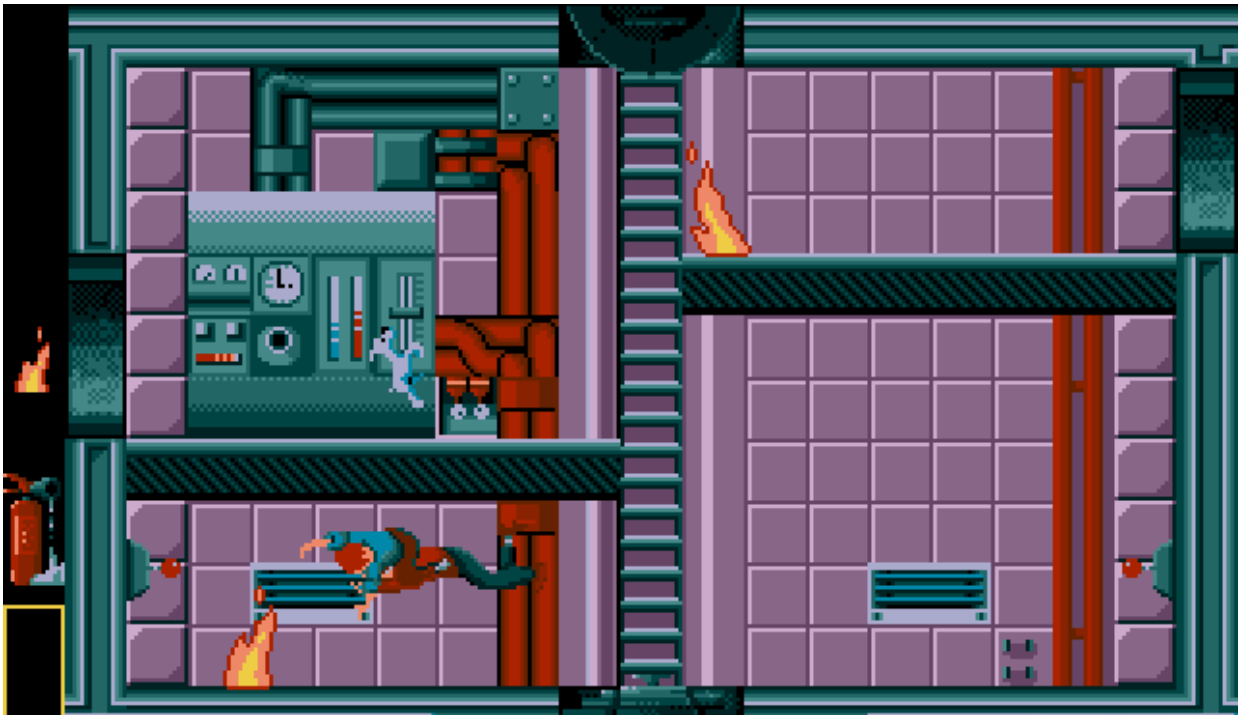


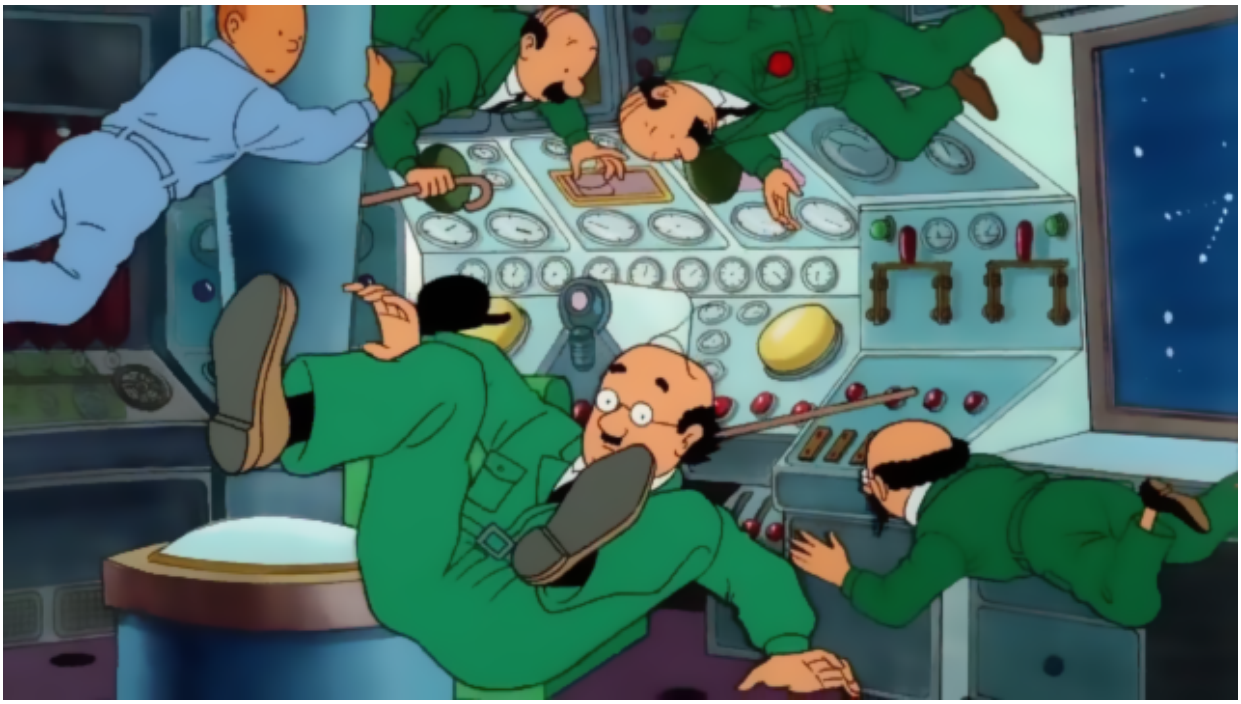
Here we must explore the inside of our ship, traipsing up and down ladders, defusing bombs and extinguishing fires.

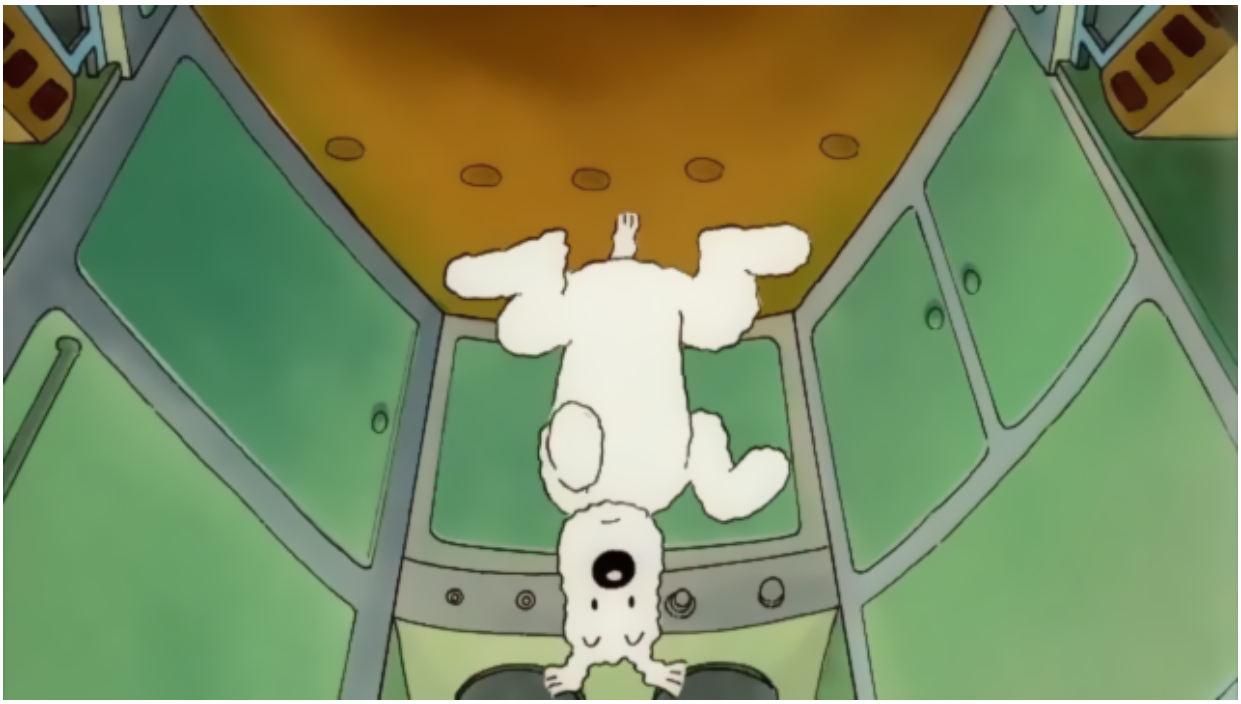


While the journey here was rocket science, this *isn't*. Defusing an ascending number of bombs and dousing flames is merely a matter of touching them, assuming we're in possession of the relevant fire-fighting equipment in the case of the latter. What complicates matters is the fact that we have just one life, the flip-screen scrolling game runs faster than a white, fluffy pet pooch with its tail on fire, and Bordurian spy/kidnapper/arsonist/bomb-happy terrorist, Colonel Boris Jurgens, who instigated this fiasco in the first place stalks the corridors relentlessly creating further chaos.

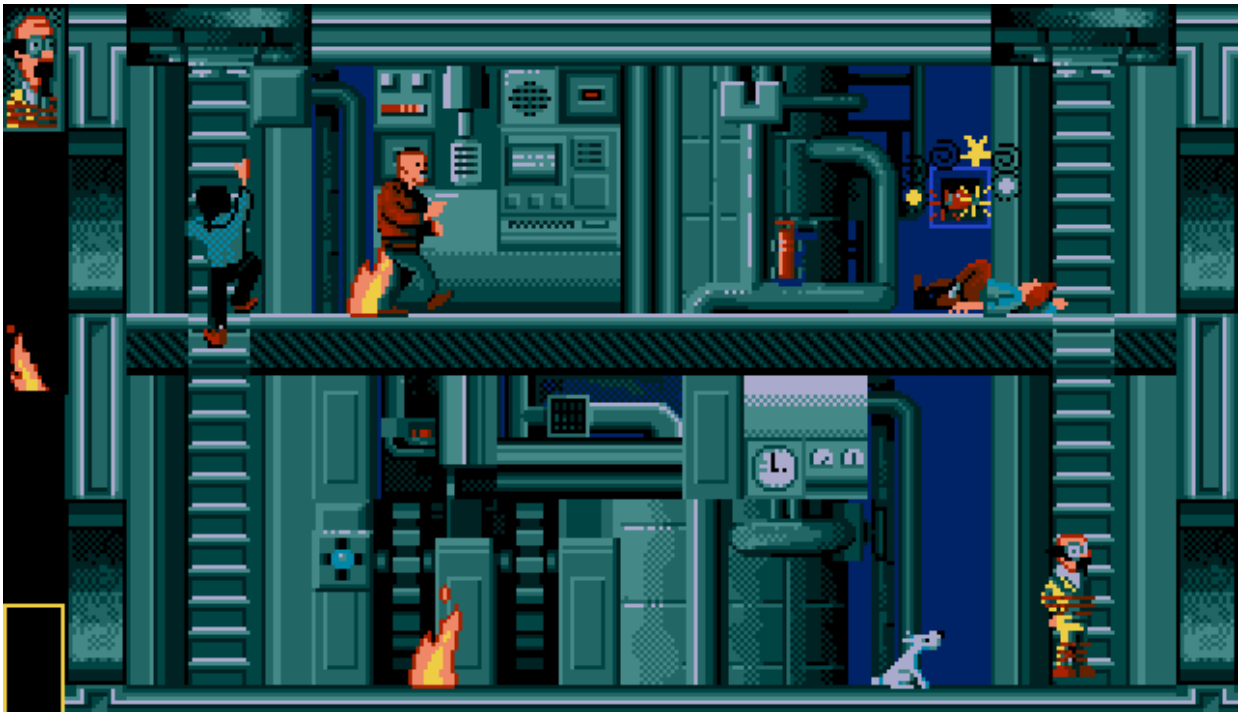
It's at least some consolation that if it all gets a tad too hectic and disorientating we can switch off the gravity with the F1 key, and hopefully float weightlessly out of harm's way in slow motion.





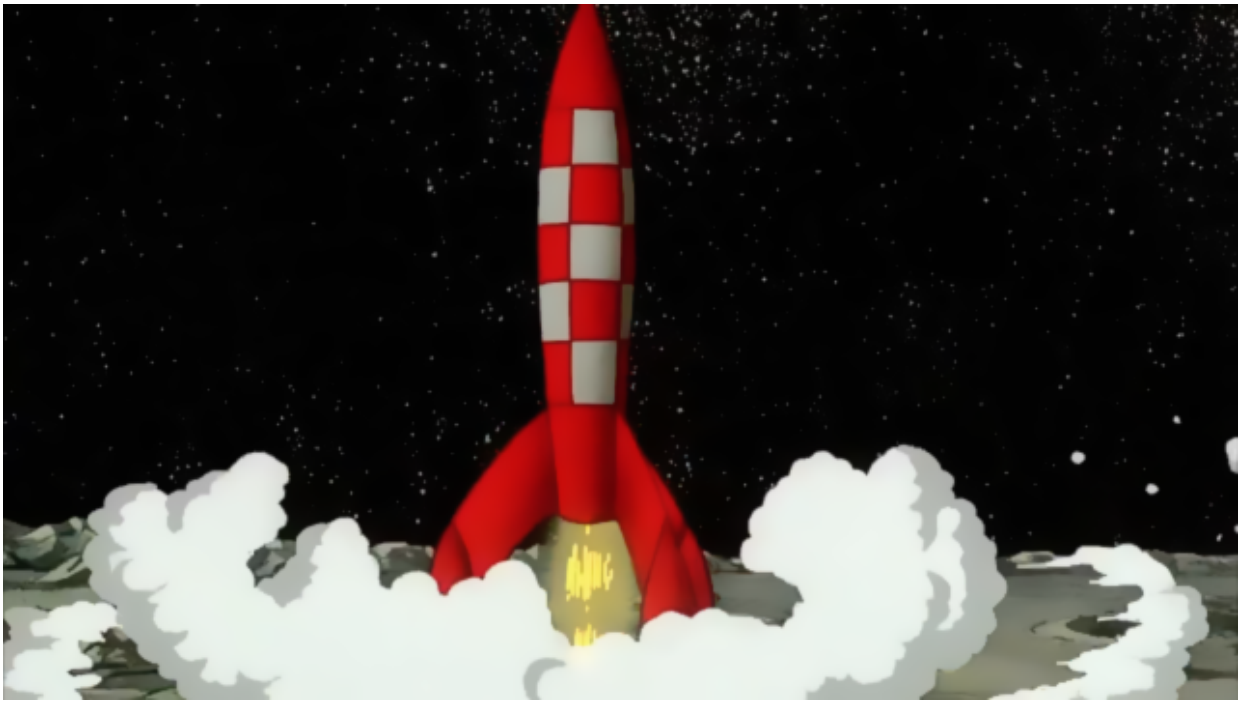


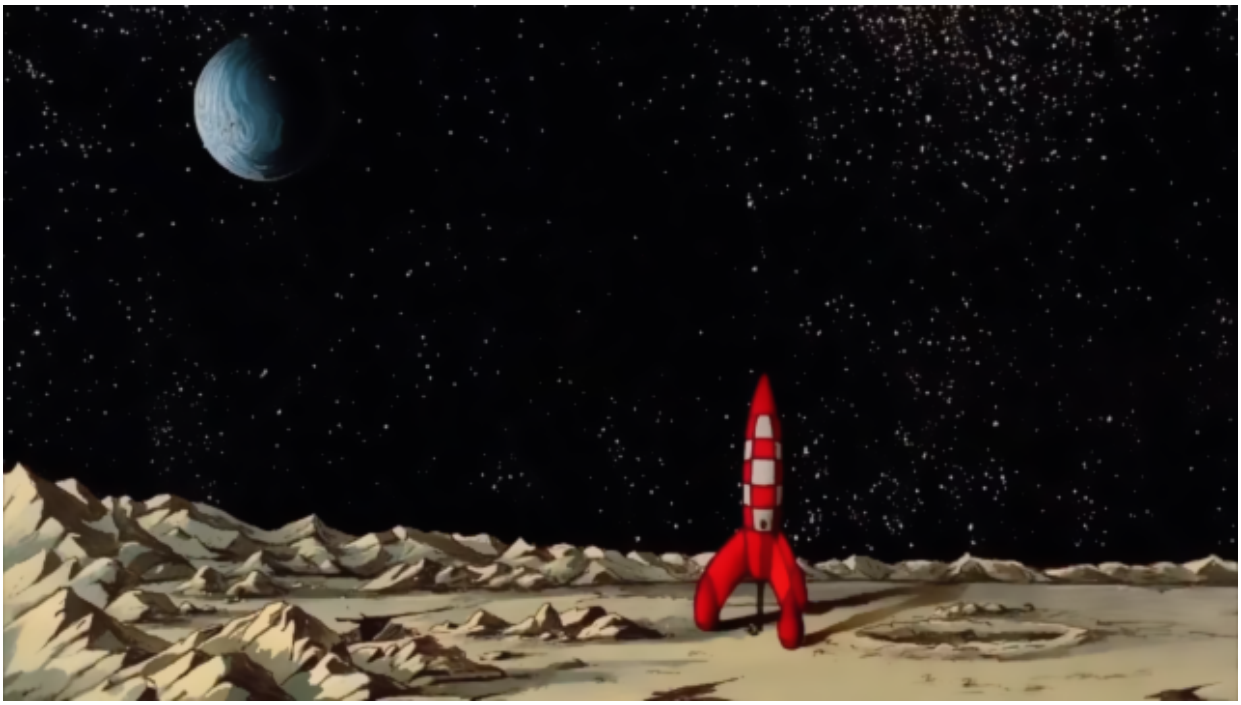
Ultimately the goal is to rescue our chums, Captain Haddock, Professor Calculus and Snowy, while evading or 'extinguishing' our marauding, laser-shooting nemesis, Boris.



If we can achieve this within the designated time limit, without being detonated, we reach the moon, the final task being to land safely.

Rather ironically, Tintin on the Moon is entirely oriented towards getting there, and winds up just as you'd expect the adventure to begin. It's enough to make you channel Haddock with a pseudo-sweary "billions of bilious blue blistering barnacles" or "ten thousand thundering typhoons" and launch your copy of Tintin into the nearest interstellar wormhole.





On the plus side, you'll find no evidence of the kind of blase racial stereotyping Tintin has in the past been accused of promoting... or ethnocentrism, or animal abuse, or

colonialism, or excessive violence, or fascism. Not a *complete* shambles then.